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The Little Scroll of Revelation 10: Prophecy or Excuse?

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THE LITTLE SCROLL OF REVELATION 10: PROPHECY OR EXCUSE?

A Paper

Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Course
RELB 556 Studies in Revelation

By

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THE LITTLE SCROLL OF REVELATION 10: PROPHECY OR EXCUSE?

Introduction

The "Great Disappointment." Most Seventh-day Adventist Christians are familiar with its meaning. Most Adventists see it as part of their history, one they can be proud about. Other Adventists are not well versed with their history. Still others may feel embarrassed because the origin of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is based on a mistake. Or, is it?

The Seventh-day Adventist Church emerged in the mid-nineteenth century from a series of highly significant events. Millennial hopes culminated in the fervent expectation of Christ's return on October 22, 1844. Similar to the experience of the early disciples after the cross (cf. Luke 24:21), the disappointment was bitter when He failed to return as the Millerites had hoped.¹

William Miller and his followers reached the conclusion that Jesus would return on October 22, 1844 after studying the prophecy of Dan. 8:14, "And he said to me, "For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed."² Miller, like some of his contemporaries, believed that the

¹Arthur Chadwick, "What on Earth Happened in 1844?" *Adventist Review Online*, <http://www.adventistreview.org/2013-1529-p16> (accessed June 20, 2017).

²*New King James Version Bible*, 2008 edition. All further quotes from Scripture in this paper will be from the New King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

sanctuary to be cleansed was the earth,³ hence, the Second Coming of Jesus; but Jesus did not return. "Critics of Adventism often poke fun at this part of our history."⁴ Out of the "Great Disappointment" arose the doctrine of the "investigative judgment."

In the early morning hours Hiram Edson and a few others went out to his barn to pray, and as they prayed, he felt assured that light would come. A little later, as Edson and a friend were crossing a cornfield to visit fellow Adventists, it seemed as if a hand touched his shoulder. He looked up to see as if in a vision the heavens opened, and Christ in the heavenly sanctuary entering into the most holy place, there to begin a work of ministry in behalf of His people, instead of coming forth from the most holy place to cleanse the world with fire, as they had taught.⁵

Some would say that this "vision" was simply too convenient, considering the Millerites were being ridiculed. This is the opinion of bestselling author and Christian apologist Cris D. Putnam; he says,

Reaching for stars, Hiram Edson speculated that Miller's assumption that the sanctuary represented the earth was the problem and that it actually represented the sanctuary in heaven. Now the cleansing conveniently became the investigative judgment. Accordingly, the October 22, 1844 date was modified to denote when Christ entered the Holy of Holies in the heavenly sanctuary, not the Second Coming. This remnant group became the Seventh-day Adventist Church of today and this modification is called the doctrine of the pre-Advent Divine Investigative Judgment.

³P. Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1977), 30.

⁴G. T. Ng, "From Confusion to Commission," *Adventist Review Online*, <http://www.adventistreview.org/1515-23> (accessed June 20, 2017).

⁵Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1882), 28.

Frankly, it seems like a lame excuse. Miller was simply mistaken.⁶

Seeing the investigative judgment as an excuse is not a new idea. There have been many who have had problems with this doctrine ever since 1857, even in Adventist circles.⁷ A few examples of these are Dudley Canright, who was an Adventist evangelist and writer; Albion F. Ballenger who was an Adventist minister; and W.W. Fletcher who was a colporteur, evangelist, administrator, and college Bible teacher. All these had issues with the investigative judgment and the heavenly sanctuary message. More recently, Raymond F. Cottrell who taught religion at Pacific Union College (an Adventist institution) and Desmond Ford who taught religion in Avondale College in Australia (also an Adventist institution).⁸

While an in-depth study of the investigative judgment is not the purpose of this paper it is important to realize that this doctrine and how Adventist's arrived at it is open to criticism from within and without. In fact, this criticism

⁶Cris D. Putnam, "William Miller and the Great Disappointment: A Legacy of Heresy," *Academia.edu*, http://www.academia.edu/8929051/WILLIAM_MILLER_AND_THE_GREAT_DISAPPOINTMENT_A_LEGACY_OF_HERESY (accessed June 20, 2017).

⁷Marvin Moore, *The Case for the Investigative Judgment: Its Biblical Foundation* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2010), 61.

⁸*Ibid.*, 61-66.

should be expected and Seventh-day Adventists should be prepared to meet it.⁹

The purpose of this paper is to study the Great Disappointment of October 22, 1844, considering Bible prophecy. In particular, it will focus on the study of the little scroll of Revelation 10 and its relation to the Great Disappointment. Furthermore, this paper will show evidence that the instructions given to the apostle John in Rev. 10:11 are related to the investigative judgment in the heavenly sanctuary.

The evidence presented in this paper will be of help to those Seventh-day Adventists who either are not familiar with Adventist history, who feels embarrassed about the history of Adventist origins, or who simply do not know how to answer the critics. After all, it would be an error to suppose that the doctrine of the investigative judgment came out of nowhere."¹⁰ The evidence presented in this paper can also be of help to Seventh-day Adventists critics, showing that the doctrine of the investigative judgement is not an excuse, as argued by Cris D. Putnam mentioned above, but that it has a biblical basis.

While an exegesis of Rev. 10 will be presented, this paper will not address the seven thunders of verses 3-4. The reason

⁹Leroy E. Froom, *Movement of Destiny* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1971), 543.

¹⁰Moore, 55.

for this is because John was told not to write what they said and, while an in-depth study could be done on these, it would not change the purpose and outcome of this study.

AN EXEGESIS OF REVELATION 10

After the sound of the sixth trumpet in Rev. 9:13-21, the Apostle John's attention is directed to yet another vision. He says, "I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow was on his head, his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire" (10:1). "Revelation 10 comprises the first segment of a parenthetical passage occurring between the accounts of the sixth and seventh trumpets. . . . The connections between these parenthetical passages and their contexts provide an aid for their interpretation."¹¹ We had seen this style of writing before in, Rev. 7. When the sixth seal was opened in chapter 6 John sees several natural disasters. The chapter ends in 6:17 by saying, "For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" Chapter 7 answers the question by pointing to the 144,000. "The parenthesis of chapters 10 and 11 answers a question about what God's people are supposed to be doing when judgment is crashing down around them and they are about to be

¹¹William H. Shea, "The Mighty Angel," in *Symposium on Revelation—Book I*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1992), 280.

sealed and Jesus is about to come.”¹² This paper will provide evidence that what God’s people are supposed to be doing is proclaiming the truth of the investigative judgment in the context of the everlasting gospel.

By looking at 10:1 the first question that needs to be answered is, who is the mighty angel? For many this might not be an important issue, after all, Revelation presents several angels; thus, this one is just another one among them. However, this angel “is unique in that his appearance suggests an angel-theophany. No other angel in Revelation or in the NT is arrayed with divine-like insignia as is this angel.”¹³ The first three verses provide several characteristics of this angel as it descends from heaven. “First, a pair of descriptive modifiers that refer to the angel as ‘another’ and ‘mighty.’”¹⁴ The word ἄλλος (another) indicates that the angel is not one of the seven angels of the trumpets who are introduced in 8:2.¹⁵ However, the word ἰσχυρὸν (mighty) may complicate things because it appears elsewhere in Revelation (5:2 and 18:21).

¹²Seth J. Pierce, *What We Believe: Prophecies of Revelation for Teens* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2013), 133.

¹³Louise A. Brighton, “The Angel of Revelation: An Angel of God and Icon of Jesus Christ” (PhD diss., Saint Louis University, 1991), 79.

¹⁴Shea, 283.

¹⁵Brighton, 80.

In 5:2 we read of an angel who is described as strong (ἰσχυρὸν) asking who was "worthy to open the scroll." This may give the impression that the angel of 10:1 may be the same as in 5:2. In fact, some have linked this angel with Gabriel.¹⁶ However, we need to look carefully at his characteristics. The first one is that he is clothed with a cloud. It is important to point out that he is not coming on a cloud or speaking from a cloud but clothed in a cloud. "The cloud, a traditional symbol of the glory of God (Exod. 19:9, 16-17; 33:10; 34:1-4; Num. 11:23; 12:5-9), is associated with the 'shekinah,' the presence of the divine in the tent of meeting or the house of the Lord."¹⁷

The second characteristic is having a rainbow upon his head. In 4:3 we read of another rainbow encircling the throne of God. Thus, upon seeing this angel in 10:1 we are reminded of the glory of God. The rainbow, however, has another biblical significance; it was to serve as a memorial that God would not destroy the earth again (Gen. 9:12-17), thus, signifying His faithfulness and mercy.¹⁸

¹⁶Grant R. Osborne, "John and the Little Scroll," in *Revelation*, ed. Moises Silva (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 393.

¹⁷John R. Yeatts, "Revelation 10:1-11:19: The Witness of the Faithful," in *Revelation*, ed. Elmer A. Martens and Willard M. Swartley (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2003), 183.

¹⁸Keith Krell, "The Bittersweet Book (Revelation 10:1-11)," *Bible.org*, <http://bible.org/seriespage/19-bittersweet-book-revelation-101-11> (accessed June 20, 2017).

The third characteristic of the angel is that his face was like the sun. John saw this earlier when he saw Jesus in 1:16. This is probably a symbol of the glory of God and it is alluded on the face of Moses when he descended Mount Sinai and the face of Jesus when he was transfigured.¹⁹ In the OT this light is an attribute of God which is likened to the sun (Isa. 60:20). John also says that the angel had feet like pillars of fire. This seems to be an allusion to the pillar of fire that God sent to guide the Israelites through the desert.²⁰ However, it also points to the description of Christ's feet in Rev. 1:13, 15.²¹

More could be said about each of these characteristics, however, enough evidence has been presented to safely conclude that this angel in 10:1 is none other than Jesus Christ. Some may feel uncomfortable in referring to Jesus as an angel because it is assumed that calling Jesus an angel is as if saying He was a created being. However, it must be pointed out that the word "angel" comes from the Greek ἄγγελον (angelon) which means "messenger."²² In fact, the term "angel of the Lord" is found in many places throughout the Bible referring to times God appeared

¹⁹Yeatts, 183.

²⁰Krell, 2.

²¹Shea, 285.

²²Biblehub, *NASB Greek-English Lexicon*,
<http://biblehub.com/lexicon/revelation/10-1.htm> (accessed July 12, 2017).

to His servants to deliver a message (Gen. 16, 22, Exod. 3, Judg. 6, etc.). In the case of Rev. 10:1 Jesus has an important message to give to John, thus, He is referred to as an "angel" but with divine characteristics as it has already been pointed out.

Let us look at 10:2, "He had a little book open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land." It is this little book that is the focus of this paper, thus, a more detailed discussion will take place below. For now, it is important to point out that by his description of where and how the angel is standing John is simply alluding to the worldwide significance of the message that is about to be communicated.²³

WHAT IS THE LITTLE SCROLL?

As mentioned above, the angel seen by John in 10:1, who has been identified as Jesus, has a little scroll. This little scroll was first mentioned in verse 2, but it is mentioned again in verses 8-9,

Then the voice which I heard from heaven spoke to me again and said, "Go, take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the earth." So I went to the angel and said to him, "Give me the little book." And he said to me, "Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth."

²³Osborne, 396.

In both verses 2 and 8 John mentions that the little scroll is open, which suggests that the scroll had been closed at some point in the past.²⁴ Parting from this premise the first question that needs to be asked is, is there a book or scroll that is said to be closed in Scripture and in particular, the book of Revelation? The answer is yes, it is found in Revelation 5.

David E. Holwerda asks,

Is it related to the sealed scroll of chapter 5? Part of the debate revolves around the terms used to identify the respective scrolls: *biblion* in chapter 5, *bibliaridion* three times, and *biblion* once in chapter 10. While *biblion* is diminutive in form, in usage it has lost its diminutive significance. This is a common phenomenon both in Koine Greek and in the book of Revelation. The issue is whether *bibliaridion* is an authentic diminutive.²⁵

Holwerda concludes that the scroll of Revelation 5 and 10 cannot be the same by quoting David Aune in his commentary of Rev. 1-5 who argues,

The two terms for the scroll in chapter 10 are "the only true diminutives found in Revelation." *Bibliaridion* is the true diminutive, and since in Revelation 10:8 *biblion* synonymously refers to this *bibliaridion*, *biblion* in this instance regains diminutive significance, even though elsewhere in Revelation it is a "faded diminutive. . . . The scrolls of Revelation 5 and 10 should not be considered identical."²⁶

²⁴Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009), 327.

²⁵David E. Holwerda, "The Church and the Little Scroll (Revelation 10, 11)," *Calvin Theological Journal* 34, (1999): 150-151.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 151.

However, Ranko Stefanovic argues;

Originally, the term *biblion* was used for a little scroll (as a diminutive of *biblos*). Later this diminutive meaning of *biblion* vanished, and by the time of John the word *bibliaridion* was used instead for a scroll of a smaller size. *Biblios* and *biblion* gradually came to have the same meaning; they were used synonymously and often interchangeably with reference to a scroll regardless of its size. . . . Especially interesting is that in Revelation 10:2 the little scroll is called *bibliaridion*, and in verse 8 it is called *biblion*. . . . The probable use for the diminutive *bibliaridion* in Revelation 10 and the emphasis on the fact that it was opened may be for the sake of contrasting it with the scroll of Revelation 5, which was large and was closed and sealed.²⁷

Stefanovic provides an interesting argument to explain his belief that the scroll of Rev. 5 and 10 are identical. For one, the little scroll of Rev. 10 is open, which implies it was closed or sealed in the past. The scroll of Rev. 5 is sealed, however, the process of unsealing it takes place between chapters 6-9.

Stefanovic explains that the scene in Rev. 5 is of the coronation of Jesus. Accordingly, Jesus, received a copy of the scroll of the covenant. This is an allusion to the times of the Israelite kings whom with the royal crown, received a copy of the scroll of the covenant, which, in actuality, was the book of Deuteronomy. The possession of this scroll gave the king the authority to rule.²⁸ Therefore, by receiving the scroll of the

²⁷Stefanovic, 326-327.

²⁸Ibid., 205.

covenant in Rev. 5, Jesus, by being the Lamb who was slain, is declared King of Kings having the right to rule.

There are two important differences, however, between the scroll of Rev. 5 and 10. According to 5:1 the scroll was written inside and on the back; chapter 10 does not mention this, which would have been an important characteristic. Stefanovic says that this kind of document, written inside and on the back, was a common practice in ancient times (Exod. 32:15, Ezek. 2:9-10). He believes that it describes a "double document" which consisted of two copies of the text in the same sheet.²⁹

Then we have the fact that the scroll of chapter 5 is sealed, which, of course, appears open in chapter 10. The reason this is important because Stefanovic alluded to the scroll of the covenant presented to the Israelite king upon his coronation. This scroll was not sealed for it was important for the new king to read it. Why was the scroll of chapter 5 sealed? While acknowledging the custom of sealing a will or testament with a minimum of seven seals, according to Roman law, Stefanovic says, "The 'sealing' resulted from the 'unworthiness' and unfaithfulness of the Israelite kings and the people over who they ruled (Isa. 8:16; Dan. 12:4, 9)."³⁰ Thus, it appears

²⁹Stefanovic, 201.

³⁰Ibid., 202, 208.

that God decided to seal the scroll in Rev. 5 due to the unfaithfulness of His people.

The clearest argument against the belief that the scrolls of chapter 5 and 10 are the same are in the seals themselves. Stefanovic assumes that the seven seals have been opened by the time of John's vision in chapter 10.³¹ However, if the historical timeline is followed it will lead to a different conclusion. For example, the sixth seal, which is opened in 6:12, mentions events that took place between November 1, 1755 (the Lisbon earthquake) and November 13, 1833 (the Great Leonid Shower). Chapter 6 ends with the question, "who is able to stand? This is answered in chapter 7 with the vision of the 144,000. Chapter 8 starts with the opening of the seventh seal and the close of probation.³² This being the case, historically at least, we are living in the time of the sixth seal. The seventh seal which, as already mentioned, is the close of probation, has not been yet been opened. This means that the scroll of chapter 5 is still closed, thus, it cannot be the same open scroll of chapter 10. Furthermore, the vision of chapter 10 occurs in the context of the seven trumpets which also end with the close of probation at

³¹Stefanovic, 327.

³²Edwin Reynolds, RELB 556-A Studies in Revelation (PowerPoint), Southern Adventist University, Collegedale, TN, 2017.

the sound of the seventh trumpet; an event that has not yet happened.

THE SCROLL OF REVELATION 10 AND ITS RELATION TO THE "SEALING" IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL

The question of what is the scroll in Rev. 10 still remains unanswered. To find the answer we must review 10:5-7,

The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer, but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets.

There is a clear parallel between 10:5-6 and Dan. 12:7, notice,

Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that it shall be for a time, times, and half a time; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished.

"Dan. 12 and Rev. 10 are the only two passages in the Bible that refer to angels swearing oaths."³³ The difference is that while the angel of Dan. 12 swears that it shall be for a time, times, and half a time, the angel of Rev. 10 swears that there should be delay no more. Furthermore, we read in Dan. 12:4 about

³³Shea, 299.

a sealing of a book (scroll) until the time of the end. This sealing represents in a symbolic way that in the time of the end the prophecies of the book of Daniel would be understood,³⁴ a fact also shown in Dan. 12:4-7 where Daniel is promised that "knowledge shall increase." One additional point worth mentioning is that after the angel swears that it shall be for a time, times, and half of a time in Dan. 12:7 it says, and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these *things* shall be finished. This refers to the period that the little horn of Dan. 7:25 was able to defeat the saints during the long period of persecution that lasted for a time, times, and half of a time.³⁵

Since there is a parallel between Dan. 12 and Rev. 10, the fact that the scroll has been opened means that the time of the end has begun.

Even though it is used in different ways in the two passages, the verb "to seal" strengthens the link between them, because it is found in the immediate context of the oaths of the angels. This evidence points us in the direction of identifying the open scroll in the hand of the angel with the scroll of the prophet Daniel that he was instructed to seal until "the time of the end" (Dan. 12:4).³⁶

³⁴Ibid., 299

³⁵Zdravko Stefanovic, *Daniel Wisdom to the Wise: Commentary on the book of Daniel* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2007), 443.

³⁶Shea, 299.

Since the opening of the scroll is tied to the beginning of the time of the end when the prophecies of Daniel would be understood, the next step is to determine when the time of the end began. According to Dan. 12:7 the time of the end is connected to the "time, times, and half a time." The word time from the Hebrew *iddan* is translated "season," and is often interpreted prophetically as a full year. As such, time (one), times (two), and half a time equal to three and a half years or 1260 days.³⁷ In determining the meaning for time prophecies in scripture we apply the formula that one prophetic day equals one literal year; a rule we see applied in both the books of Ezekiel and Daniel. Thus, since time, times and half of a time equate to 1260 days, using the formula for interpreting time prophecies, we have 1260 years.³⁸ We see this time period again in Rev. 12:6 where John speaks of the church (the woman) protected by God for a period of 1260 days and time, times and half of a time in Rev. 12:14.

Based on this we can conclude that the time of the end starts at the end of the 1260 years. To know when this period ends, we must know when it began. As already stated, the period

³⁷Z. Stefanovic, 277.

³⁸Jacques B. Doukhan, *Secrets of Daniel: Wisdom and Dreams of a Jewish Prince in Exile* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000), 109.

of "time, times, and half a time" appears in Dan. 7:25 in connection with the little horn (antichrist) and the duration of his reign. Scholars point to Papal Rome as this little horn whose power began in A.D. 538 when the Ostrogoth's control of Rome was lifted. By adding 1260 years to A.D. 538 we arrive at the year 1798, which was the year when Pope Pius VI was exiled, ending the 1260-year reign of the little horn.³⁹

It seems clear then that the prophetic time of the end began in 1798 and as such, the prophetic portion of the book of Daniel, not understood before, would be understood at the start of this period (the time of the end).

When we analyze the book of Daniel we see that the prophet himself was baffled by the visions he was given. In particular, he could not understand the time prophecies. Notice 8:26-27,

And the vision of the evenings and mornings which was told is true; Therefore, seal up the vision, for it refers to many days in the future. And I, Daniel, fainted and was sick for days; afterward I arose and went about the king's business. I was astonished by the vision, but no one understood it.

While it would seem that Daniel had problems understanding the 1260-day/year prophecy, as explained above, the vision of the evenings and mornings refers to 8:14, "And he said to me, for two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be

³⁹William Shea, *Daniel: A Reader's Guide* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2005), 123.

cleansed." Thus, Daniel could also not understand the time prophecy of the 2300-day/years. We must focus on this prophecy because it relates to the experience of the Millerites.

In Dan. 9:25 we are told when the 2300-day/year prophecy began,

Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; The street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times.

Dan. 9 refers to the 70-week prophecy which were determined for Daniel's people, or better translated, "to be cut off."⁴⁰ The 70 weeks were "cut off" from the 2300-day/year prophecy of 8:14.

The start of the 2300-day/year prophecy according to 9:25 was the decree to restore and build Jerusalem. Scholars believe the decree referred to here is the one given to Ezra (see Ezra 7:12-16), which took place in 457 B.C.⁴¹ By doing some math we can determine when the 2300-day/year prophecy ended and when the cleansing of the sanctuary of 9:25 began. If we add 2300-years to 457 B.C. it takes us to the year 1844 A.D.

⁴⁰Shea, *Daniel: A Readers Guide*, 150.

⁴¹Ibid., 154-155.

JOHN'S BITTERSWEET EXPERIENCE AND ITS RELATION TO ADVENTIST HISTORY

The evidence provided above reveals that the scroll of Rev. 10 must be the prophetic portion of the book of Daniel; in particular, the time prophecies. John is told to in 10:9 to take and eat the scroll. "To eat the scroll means to assimilate completely its message, to master thoroughly its contents, and to make it part of one's life."⁴² By eating of the scroll John assimilated, that is, understood the contents of the prophetic portion of the book of Daniel as it related to the 2300-day/year prophecy and the cleaning of the sanctuary.

As mentioned in the introduction, it was the prophecy of the 2300-days/years that William Miller studied. The study of this prophecy led him to believe that Jesus would return at the end of the 2300-days/year when the sanctuary, which Miller believed represented the earth, would be cleansed by fire. According to his calculations this would take place on October 22, 1844. How happy must the Millerites have been knowing that Jesus' second coming was approaching. Yet, how sad they must have felt when he did not return.⁴³

⁴²Yeatts, 188

⁴³C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares: The Message of Revelation for You and Your Family* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1985), 278.

The experience of the Millerites was the same as John's experience. They believed that it was the earth that was to be cleansed, therefore, Jesus would return. The news was sweet to them, but when Jesus did not return, the reality became bitter. Of this experience Ellen G. White wrote, "It was hard to take up the vexing cares of life that we thought had been laid down forever. It was a bitter disappointment that fell upon the little flock whose faith had been so strong and whose hope had been so high."⁴⁴

While John's experience was bittersweet he is told in 10:11, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings." The section below will address this issue.

AN EXEGESIS OF REVELATION 11:1-2

The answer to what John, and by extension, the Millerites, was to prophesy is found Rev. 11:1, "Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood saying, Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there." It seems clear that the central issue in these verses is that of measuring the temple and those that are there. The Greek for measure is *metreó* which means to evaluate or judge. In fact,

⁴⁴Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Early Years, 1827-1862*, Vol. 1 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2002), 54.

in the NT it refers to the judicial work of God in the Last Judgement.⁴⁵

There is also a correlation between Rev. 11:1 and Lev. 16 which describes the "Day of Atonement." In the latter there are four entities for which atonement was made, the priests, the sanctuary, the altar, and the congregation (vv. 6, 11, 16-18). The only difference between Rev. 11 and Lev. 16 is that in Rev. 11 the priests are not mentioned, this is probably because Christ is our High priest and He would not need atonement. The "Day of Atonement" was a final day of "measuring" for Israel, that is, a day of judgment in which the people were to "afflict" themselves, and those did not afflict themselves were cut off (see Lev. 23:27-28).⁴⁶ Furthermore, measuring was also related in making a difference between those who lived and those died (see Sam. 8:2).⁴⁷ Thus, it seems clear that the command to "prophecy again" is related to a judgment in the heavenly sanctuary (for the earthly sanctuary did not exist by the time John wrote revelation) which is what took place in the earthly "Day of Atonement" and which was also the day that the sanctuary was cleansed.

⁴⁵R. Stefanovic, 344.

⁴⁶Kenneth A. Strand, "An Overlooked Old-Testament Background to Revelation 11:1," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 22, (1984); 322.

⁴⁷R. Stefanovic, 344.

Rev. 11:2 further clarifies this, "But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months." The outer court of the temple was called the "Court of the Gentiles," that is, those who were not part of God's people. In Revelation, the Gentiles are those who are hostile to God's people and are opposed to the gospel, which is why John says they trample the holy city for forty-two months which corresponds to the activities of the sea beast in Rev. 13.⁴⁸

The point here is that the judgment done on the earthly "Day of Atonement" was only for God's people no foreigners were part of it. In the heavenly "Day of Atonement" the same rules are followed, the "measuring" or judgment is for those who are part of God's people, that is, those who profess allegiance to Christ. "The measuring is for the purpose of deciding who is to be sealed—namely, those who belong to God and are faithful to Him."⁴⁹ This may be what the apostle Peter had in mind when he wrote in 1 Pet. 4:17, "For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?"

⁴⁸Ibid., 345.

⁴⁹R. Stefanovic, 349.

CONCLUSION

As with any biblical topic, much more could be said if we dug deeper into the scriptures; however, the limitations on the length of this paper do not allow it. But, enough evidence has been presented to satisfy the uninformed Adventist or the evangelical critic about where does the doctrine of the investigative judgment comes from. This study has shown that God had a purpose in mind even back to the time of Daniel when He gave the prophecy of the cleansing of the sanctuary that was to take place at the end the 2300-day/years of Dan. 8:14. It seems clear that the knowledge of the ministry of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary was so important that God informed the prophet Daniel. While it is clear that the prophet Daniel did not fully understand this time prophecy (2300-day/year), the knowledge of it would come at the time of the end which started in 1798 after the end of the 1260 years spoken of in Dan. 7:25 and 12:7.

We have seen that the little scroll given to John in Rev. 10 is the prophetic portion of the book of Daniel, in particular the time prophecies which, as already said, would be understood at the time of the end. The time period spoken of in Rev. 10

takes place after 1798, thus, the time prophecies of Dan. 7:25, 8:14, and 12:7 would be understood.

The Apostle John's bittersweet experience prophetically pointed to the Millerite experience that came from the belief that the second coming of Jesus would take place on October 22, 1844, a very sweet news; but when Jesus did not return, it became a bitter and sad reality. However, the story did not end with John's bittersweet experience. After this he was told to prophesy again (Rev. 10:11). As we have seen the command to prophesy again is related to the measuring of the temple in heaven as seen in Rev. 11:1-2. This measuring is tied to judgment as seen in the "Day of Atonement" of the OT which was also a day of judgment for the people of Israel. The "Day of Atonement" was only for the people of Israel and in that day the people were separated between those who afflicted their souls and were accepted, and those who did not and were rejected.⁵⁰ We find the same theme in Rev. 11:1-2 thus proving that what John was told to prophesy, and by extension the Millerites, had to do with the judgement taking place in the heavenly sanctuary. In this heavenly judgment we see a "Day of Atonement" theme, and like in the earthly one, a separation is done between those who are truly surrendered to Jesus and those who are simply making a

⁵⁰R. Stefanovic, 348.

profession of Christianity.⁵¹ This heavenly judgment, like the earthly, is meant only for God's people, thus the exclusion of the outer court of the temple (reserved for the Gentiles) in 11:2.

Some have asked, why would God allow the Millerites to go through the "Great Disappointment" of 1844? Why allow them to make the mistake of interpreting the cleansing of the sanctuary as the earth and thereby believing that Jesus would come? Well, while some may see William Miller and his followers as "lunatics" because they believed Jesus was coming and He did not come, all along this was part of God's plan and the "mistake" was even prophesied as part of God's plan. It must be clarified that God does not make mistakes, however, in this case, it was necessary to draw attention to the sanctuary as part of the end time message, which may not have happened otherwise. Clearly, the little book of Rev. 10 was no excuse, it was a prophecy that pointed to the Millerite experience, and the command given to John in 10:11, "prophecy again," has been given to Seventh-day Adventist Christians as well. The truth of the investigative judgment must be proclaimed, after all, it is part of the first angel's message in Rev. 14:6-7,

Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven,
having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell
on the earth to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people

⁵¹Ibid., 349.

saying with a loud voice, Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His *judgment* has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.

"When the proclaimed gospel message is heard by the whole world, then the end will come and earth's history will reach its conclusion."⁵² May this happen soon.

⁵²R. Stefanovic, 340.

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